

field works, and the Govan works, for the construction of steam-engines and iron vessels, the establishments of Mr. R. Napier. In these important works 1,300 men are employed weekly, and the most powerful and perfect means are used to effect the various processes. At the latter establishment, amongst other works in hand, was an enormous iron frigate for the Government, the *Simoom*, of 2,000 tons burden, wholly formed of iron,—iron plates over iron ribs.\* At Mr. Dixon's immense works also, and many others, hundreds of men are employed who might be led to give their sons the advantage of such a class, if it existed. If the schools of design must be merely drawing academies, at all events the teaching may be in accordance with the wants and opportunities of the locality.

### THE GAS MOVEMENT.

POWER AND PROFIT OF ASSOCIATION.

FROM the notable "abstract of returns" by the gas companies to Parliament,—called for, by the way, in consequence of our own previous exposure of the anomalous and most unsatisfactory state of the economics of gas-light throughout the three kingdoms, and itself in turn already so easily, but we hope instructively, anatomized,—it was clearly proved in our last article that we have now in truth no longer the least occasion either to procure or publish any evidence but their own most ample though undesigned admissions for the fact, that they not only *can* but *do* already sell their gas at prices 25 to 50 per cent. below those therefore now self-convincedly enormous charges usually exacted from the great but disunited mass of gas consumers, who, victims under the 'divide-and-govern' principle, cannot, or rather do not, bring the fear of efficient because associated "enterprise in the manufacture" before the watchful yet purblind eyes of the gas companies. And as for any pretence of justice in such admitted overcharges, on any ground whatever, we have, we think, already sufficiently, though incidentally, discussed that point in the article alluded to; and indeed, the self-condemnatory fact that some of the companies themselves admit that they make either a very trifling difference of charge, or none at all, between 'large' consumers and 'small' is of itself conclusive.†

But we have yet an even more glaring series of proofs to present than any in the extracts hitherto given in exposition of the overcharges made on 'small' consumers beyond what is admitted to be a sufficient price when exacted from 'large' establishments, which might otherwise be induced to manufacture gas for themselves. We refer to the overcharges made on 'private' consumers beyond what are equally admitted to be, since taken as, sufficient prices, when paid by 'public' such as municipal corporations still more likely to be tempted or provoked into the adoption of the like economical measure.

At Belfast, the corporation have had the public lamps lighted at about 2s. per 1,000 cubic feet, while private consumers have been charged from 4s. 10½d. up to 7s. 11d., and even 'large' private consumers 4s. 6d. up to 6s. 6d. This, too, is a moderated arrangement of previous charges of 1s. per 1,000 for public lamps, and 7s. to 10s. for private consumption!

At Gloucester, while the public lighting was done at 3s., private consumers were done at 12s. 6d.! A little shame, however, having come over the shadow of the gas-holding brow, the price to private consumers was re-

duced to 8s. 6d., and then to 6s., while the corporation price was *only* reduced to 2s. 6d.

At Leicester, where we proved the possibility of making gas, even on a small scale, and under various other disadvantages, at 2 per 1,000 cubic feet, the (*here certainly not too low*) price of 3s. 4d. has been charged to the corporation, while the private consumers have been taxed, over and above, to the amount of even so much as 10s. to 12s., latterly reduced, no doubt as in so many other instances by compulsion, to 7s. 1½d., 5s. 6½d., and (to large private consumers) 4s. 8d.

At Stockton, the public lights are supplied to the corporation at 2s. 6d., while 7s. 6d. is the charge made upon private consumers.

At Swansea, the public lamps are lighted at 2s. 8d., while the private dwelling cannot be lighted for less than 7s.

Having determined, on the present occasion, not to travel out of the record of the companies themselves,\* we shall say nothing as to many other similar cases which have come under our notice, partly in the shape of bitter complaint on the part of private consumers, that such an injustice should be longer suffered to exist. Such cases, however, all the more clearly shew how little dependence need be placed on the "abstract" as a full, true, and particular account of anything likely to look 'rather too bad' in its 'made up' manufacture. As it is, in the present and preceding articles we have offered enough, and more than enough, to prove the prevalence of an iniquitous and inescapable system of tantamount bribery on the part of gas companies, especially by connivance with those very corporations which ought to protect the interests not of a few of the larger rate-payers alone but of the whole of the community whom they virtually represent. Bribery we maintain it to be for such corporations to accept of such an advantage (even granting the price they pay is a fair one), so long as the mass of their constituents are *thereby* left to be plundered at the mercy of a self-seeking company, in place of being protected,—by threats, at least, of the establishment of municipal gas works, for the fair and uniform behoof of the community at large,—but bribery of a still deeper dye than otherwise, if we are to be told that the gas companies positively *lose* by such sacrifices—for the public behoof—ahem!—"and as a matter of policy," we presume, "to prevent public enterprise in the manufacture." If, on the other hand, we give gas companies and corporations the credit of believing the one incapable of offering, and the other of receiving, the bribe of a reduction of price constituting, and known to constitute a positive *loss* to the company *till otherwise made up*, and accordingly believe that no such obvious and undisguised bribery is ever practised,—if, in other words, the prices charged to such corporations be fair and remunerative prices, what in the wide world are we to think of charges five, six, seven, aye, ten hundred, per cent. beyond these fair and remunerative prices? Let the gas companies choose their horn of this dilemma. Meantime, whether corporations pay a fair price or an unfair one, we would earnestly call upon the private gas consumers to remonstrate with their representatives for thus completely and effectually compromising their interests in either way, by conniving at such acts of injustice towards the mass of their constituents, whom they have so much power to protect from the grasp of those to whose merciless clutches they are, on the contrary, thus in the meantime virtually and completely abandoned.†

As to 'large' private consumers, and the advantages conferred on them, it is clear that the gas companies can have neither interest nor reason even to paralyze their enterprise in private manufacture by offering them gas at *losing* prices, or at any other than prices that will *pay*, so that we cannot but

conclude that such prices *do pay*; and if they do, the gas companies stand confessed not only as merciless exactors, but as suicidal obstructives to the wide-spread distribution of an article of universal utility, which nature and science and art have made a present of, not to them in particular,—its mere administrators,—but to the public in general, its destined consumers.

That it is only to a comparatively small extent among the mass of large consumers that they *can* sell at 25 to 50 per cent. below their exactions from the small, we defy them to maintain; for that would be utterly inconsistent with their own established principle, that it is only when they can increase their sale to the utmost possible extent that they can afford to moderate their price to even the smallest possible extent. On the contrary, we have clearly shewn by wholesale evidence, and that too of their own shewing, that even without any increase of consumption at all, they can at this moment, if they will, diminish their present prices to the great mass of gas consumers by 25 to 50 per cent. at least, exclusive of all consideration of corporation prices, and *still* have a paying profit.

What then is the most obvious, speedy, and effectual remedy for the iniquity now exposed? Why, let us only recall for an instant the admitted reason for charging the more moderate price from the large consumer, namely, "policy, to prevent private enterprise in the manufacture," and we shall at once be convinced that, until the suppliers of gas shall prove by acts that they now perceive that it would be a much more satisfactory mode of doing business, and much more for their own ultimate interest, to reduce their prices, and thus to multiply the aggregate of the jets and burners they supply by at least a hundred fold,—that until then, the only hope for the disunited mass of gas consumers and would-be gas consumers, is centred in ASSOCIATION. Let them even associate merely in their own more limited districts, at first, and determine either to be supplied, through a single meter of their own, as an association, at the price charged to a large consumer, or at such price as they may deem reasonable under all the circumstances; or failing that, let them increase and extend their body until they can threaten, with weight and will, to carry out what the very object of the gas companies in being so very reasonable to large consumers in their charges is to prevent, namely, their own associated enterprise in the manufacture. Only let the gas consumers and the would-be gas consumers of a district so unite, and in the first place give to some one gas company an order for a large consumption of gas at such a reasonable rate, and they may depend on it, especially where there is competition, that one company or other will then be ready and willing to treat with them, leaving both company and association very great profitters by the bargain.

At Edinburgh, lately, a meeting of gas consumers, principally composed of the working classes,—who are almost all there already more or less supplied with gas light, and are hence far in advance of their metropolitan brethren,—determined to withstand an increase of charge for meters supplied by the companies, and at once to form clubs for the purchase of meters. Now, though we do not think these Edinburghers yet see their way very clearly towards their own best interests, here, for all that, we have something like a rudiment or germ of the very associations so much desiderated. Let us hope that it will be a staminal germ, and grow up into something like intelligible shape and sturdy construction, not only there, but here, and elsewhere; and we are convinced that the fruits of it will not disappoint the hopes and wishes of its cultivators.

Our object is to make the advantages of gas general, and, in order that it may be so, we must have gas cheap and good.

THE ALKALI AND GLASS TRADERS are still in a very depressed state. Several of the manufactories of crown, flint, and bottles, are closed, besides three of the principal alkali manufactories on the Tyne; and those in existence, we are afraid, are scarcely obtaining remunerating prices for their productions.—*Newcastle Guardian*.

\* The size of this enormous piece of drop-construction is 51 feet by 41 feet: the cost of the hull alone will be 50,000*l*.

† We are glad to have already something like a tribute to the truth and justice of our argument, in the manifestation of indignation on the part of companies both to renounce and to reclaim the practice of the objectionable rule under consideration. Thus, the clerk to the Wakefield Gas Company, corroborating the fact that in the article to which he alludes we "exhibit the records of the gas companies' own confessions," namely, their own Parliamentary returns of 1847, states that gas at Wakefield is not charged 5s. to 'large' consumers and 3s. to 'small,' the price to ALL being 4s. 6d. as far pleased to send us 6*l*. By referring, however, to his own return, he cannot but be convinced that our statement, notwithstanding, is correct.

\* At Wakefield, our correspondent, Mr. J. Whittaker, clerk to the company, informs us that the present charge is 4s. for public lamps, and that the charge of 4s. 6d. to private consumers, large and small, is to be reduced to this same sum in July next.

† A correspondent wishes to know if we are able to furnish data as to the proper charges for lighting public lamps with gas. The only conceivable data, or rather datum, peculiar to such charges, over and above those local and other data, of course, on which all other charges ought to be based,—may be the greater certainty of payment. Yet we could point to more than one instance in which corporations are due heavy sums to gas companies, and *cannot* pay them.